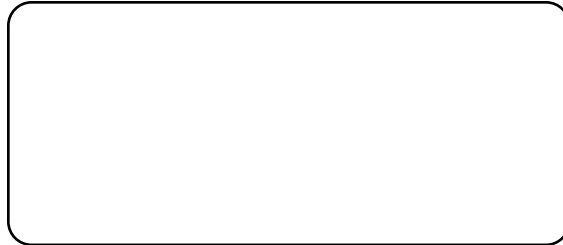


**St. Peter Lutheran
Church & School**

Rev. Timothy Bayer
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St. Johns, MI 48879

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We are on the web!
www.stpeterriley.org



THE MESSENGER
December 2024



Church Services

Divine Service – Sundays at 9:30 am

Matins – Wednesdays at 9 am (when school is in session)

Advent and Lent – Wednesday services at 7 pm

Feasts and Festivals – Services as announced in calendar and bulletin

A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

Augsburg Confession: Article XVII – Of Christ’s Return to Judgment

Also they teach that at the Consummation of the World Christ will appear for judgment, and will raise up all the dead; He will give to the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys, but ungodly men and the devils He will condemn to be tormented without end.

They condemn the Anabaptists, who think that there will be an end to the punishments of condemned men and devils.

They condemn also others who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed.

When it comes to Eschatology, or the study of the End Times, there is much confusion. My advice to the junior confirmation students is always this—just say the Creed and that is all you need to know and expect in these last days. The Apostles’ Creed says this: “He (Jesus) ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.” The Nicene Creed says this: “And He (Jesus) will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.” And the Athanasian Creed says this: “[He] is seated at the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence He will come to judge the living and the dead. At His coming all people will rise again with their bodies and give an account concerning their own deeds. And those who have done good will enter into eternal life, and those who have done evil into eternal fire.”

This is the only action of Christ that is in the future in the Creeds—his coming again in Judgment. Everything else is already accomplished—his conception, his birth, his suffering, his crucifixion and death, his descent to hell, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven. The only thing left for which we wait is His coming again in glory.

This means that anytime you hear a televangelist or your Baptist friend speaking about some form of millennialism, you can politely dismiss whatever they are saying. Though there are differing forms of this teaching, we have it summarized in this article of the Augsburg Confession as this—“certain Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed.” This Scripture does not teach. In fact, if you want to speak of the millennial rule of Christ according to Holy Scripture, this reign is happening right now and began with Christ’s ascension into heaven. We do not wait for a future rule of Jesus; he *now* has all authority in heaven and on earth given to him and is seated at the right hand of God, ruling. The only thing we wait for now is his coming again—“the consummation of the world.”

This means too that there is no secret rapture of Christians out of this world prior to the Final Day. The very verse “the rapture” is taken from (1 Thess. 4:17) is a clear text speaking not of a secret removal of Christians before the End, but of the public return of Jesus Christ at Judgment Day.

Come, Lord Jesus! (Rev. 22:20)

-Pastor Bayer

A LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

His Kingdom Will Have No End

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Luke 1: 30-33

The students have been hard at work preparing this year's Christmas Program, Jesse Tree. This year's program follows Jesus's lineage and the promises God made to his people as they awaited a Savior. The students and staff invite you to come and share in the celebration of Jesus's birth on Dec. 12. There will be a program at 11:00 and at 6:00. The program is a great opportunity for you, as members of our church, to see the students and families that are a part of our school.

There are a few other things to note that are happening in December. The PTL will meet to decorate the school for Christmas. The students will sing for the ladies at the Advent Brunch. During the last week before Christmas break, they will celebrate with their annual movie day. For movie day, the preschool through 7th-grade students gather in the gym to cuddle up in their pajamas, eat snacks, and watch a movie together. On December 19th, kindergarten through 7th grade students will share some of the songs they have been working on with their music teacher Mrs. Clark with their parents. You are all welcome to join us for this event also. It will take place at 2:00 on the 19th.

Thank you for your continued support for our school. If you have the opportunity to talk with the staff, encourage them, and share your support for the work they are doing. The words of encouragement and small acts of kindness don't go unnoticed. They are always appreciated and often come right when they are needed.

Continue to pray for the school board. They are working hard to continue to grow our school while always focusing on Christ as the center of what we do and how we do it. We know God does mighty things

Blessings in Christ,
Erika Brown
Principal/Teacher

PRESCHOOL NEWS

Merry Christmas from Preschool

The preschool class will be learning about the meaning of Christmas and the birth of Jesus throughout the month of December. Our classroom is set up with several different Christmas focused areas for the children to enjoy. We love watching the children play together and enjoy the toys and activities that are available to them.

December has been very busy with practicing for the Christmas Program that will take place on December 12th at 11:00am and 6:00pm in the school gym. We are thankful for all the time and commitment Mrs. Stout puts into making it a wonderful program. We hope to see you there!

The all-school movie day will be on December 17th. We will be watching How the Grinch Stole Christmas. Thank you to PTL for providing popcorn, cookies, and milk. This is always a wonderful day for students and staff!

Our last day of preschool for 2024 will be on December 20th. The preschool class will celebrate with a class Christmas party.

Thank you for all your prayers and support throughout the year. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Blessings,
Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Fletcher, and Mrs. Curtin



A LETTER FROM THE CANTOR

Why We Do What We Do

Recently the paraments (the tapestries on the altar, lectern and pulpit) and the vestments (pastor's garments) have been green, but now they are changing to blue. What's that about, and what do they have to do with the Church year?

Let's start by talking about the Church year. You've noticed that it doesn't correspond to the normal calendar. Rather, it centers on the two great moments in the life of Christ, his Nativity, and his Crucifixion and Resurrection. Obviously the Feast of the Nativity is set on December 25. It's interesting to realize that we really don't know the date of Christ's birth, but Christmas (Christ's Mass) has been celebrated on December 25 for nearly two thousand years.

Easter is a very different situation; it's known as a "moveable feast." That's because it's tied to the Jewish feast of Passover, the time of our Lord's passion and death. The Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar, where each month is the 28 days from one full moon to the next. Their months, and thus Passover, shift in relation to our normal calendar from one year to the next. So from at least the 4th Century, Easter has been calculated from the beginning of spring and the start of Passover. Test pastor and see if he remembers the formula: "The first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox (the first day of spring)." Since the first full moon after the official start of spring, March 21, may come as much as 28 days later, Easter can shift quite a bit, thus a "moveable feast." We say "Easter is early," or "Easter is late this year," but really it's always on time according to the formula. In fact, if you check page xxiii in the front of your hymnal, you'll see the dates of Easter all the way to 2050.

Those two events, Christmas and Easter, anchor the rest of the Church year. Let's start at the beginning; the year begins with Advent, a Latin word meaning "coming" or "arrival." It always starts four Sundays before Christmas. The focus is three-fold: looking toward the coming of the baby Jesus, obviously; but also looking toward Christ coming to us today in Word and Sacrament; and looking toward his return on the Last Day. Historically, the color of the paraments and vestments was purple, a color connected to royalty. But it's also a color for contrition and repentance, emphasizing that Christ's coming was because of our sin. In recent years a deep royal blue has been an alternative, to emphasize the coming King, and to distinguish it from the other "purple" season, Lent.

Then, as I said above, comes Christmas on December 25. And the paraments and vestments change to the brilliant white of a major feast. The rest of the world has it all wrong; they think when December 25 comes, Christmas is over. No, it's just started! For the Church, Christmas lasts for twelve days (Remember the carol, "The Twelve Days of Christmas"?). All of the Scripture lessons and the services center around the different events of the Nativity.

What is twelve days from December 25? January 6, Epiphany. It's also known as "Three Kings Day", commemorating the arrival of the magi from the east with their gifts for the newborn King. Epiphany is from a Greek word meaning "to make known, to reveal." The focus is the times and ways Jesus is made known to the world. Highlights include things like his presentation at the temple, the wedding feast at Cana. The two great events are his Baptism and his Transfiguration; these serve as the two end points of the season, also with white for major feasts. In between, the color is green, for life and growth.

Next time I'll pick up the rest of the story and explain how we get back to the long "green" season.

I hope to share more of why we do what we do. Perhaps if you have a particular question or concern, you might pass that along to me through the church office.

Your brother in Christ,
Dick Davenport

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

St. Peter Ladies Aid & LWML News

St. Peter Lutheran Church

Ladies Annual

Advent Brunch

Tuesday, December 3, 2024

9:30a.m. in the Fellowship Hall

A morning of fellowship, good food and great way to begin the Advent season.

The speakers will be Pastor Moses Dangba and his wife, Alice.

They will speak about their trip to South Sudan.



It's time to subscribe to THE LUTHERAN WITNESS to ensure a discounted rate. The Lutheran Witness is the official periodical of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is published 11 times a year. The new subscription year doesn't begin until March 2025, but orders need to be sent to the District office by December 15, 2024 to take advantage of a discounted District rate of \$21.20/year. (Individual subscriptions ordered directly from CPH are \$24.99/year.) Payment for subscriptions should be made directly to your church. Late orders will be charged an additional \$2. If you have any questions about subscriptions, contact Mary Hoy at 989-224-3178 or churchstpeterriley.org, by December 9th.

THANK YOU NOTES

Thank you for lifting up the bright light of Jesus for others to see. I am so deeply thankful to God that He chose you to supply what the work of the LCMS requires. Although giving may seem a simple act, it speaks so forcefully about the kind of Christ-following disciples God has made each of you to be. "Love one another," was Jesus' commandment to his disciples. You are doing just that through this gift, and all other acts of selfless sacrifice you make for the sake of the Gospel message. Even in financially challenging times like these, you are confessing your trust and faith in Christ alone. And I appreciate you. Thank you.

Pastor Matthew C. Harrison, President LCMS

I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to all who sent a memorial in memory of Robin, or supported us in your prayers. Pastor for such a beautiful service and to the Ladies that prepared the wonderful meal.

You are a testament to the kindness and love of this Church.

The family of Robin Lyon

Dear St. Peter Congregation,

Thank you for the scholarship to help me go to Wittenberg Academy. I am so privileged to stay at St. Peter for High School and to get such a good education from Wittenberg.

Sincerely, Andrew

Thank you for your support of missionaries and mission work throughout the world! Your contribution is very much appreciated. God is blessing our ministry through YOU, as together we partner to bring the Good News of Salvation to the world! —Global Lutheran Outreach

Dear Pastor Bayer and people of God at St. Peter Lutheran,

Thank you for your donation of \$2,000 in April. Thank you for your prayers for my work with seminary students and the church in Ghana and for Joyce's work with missionaries and missionary programs throughout Africa. We are thankful for your partnership in proclaiming Christ in Africa! P.S. We have a new granddaughter!! —David and Joyce Erber, Together in Mission

Dear beloved of the Lord,

Thank you all for the many ways you expressed your appreciation to me and my family in the month of October for Pastor Appreciation Month. It is a high honor to serve in the Office of the Holy Ministry here for God's people at St. Peter, and it is a joy to serve the Lord Jesus together with you as members of His body. May God continue to bless and preserve this congregation with a lively faith and deep love for one another. May our life together be rooted in Christ as He comes to us in Word and Sacrament and may our love be known to the world, that they too may glorify our Father who is in heaven.

In Christ, Pastor Bayer

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS & NEWS

Poinsettia Order Forms are now available to fill out and place orders. Deadline for the forms to be turned in is Monday December 9th. You may make checks payable to St. Peter Lutheran Church and either place them in the offering plate in an envelope marked POINSETTIA or turn it into the church office in an envelope marked POINSETTIA. If you are giving cash please make sure your name is included on the envelope.

Capital Area Cordesman

Join us as Capital Area Cordesman will be here on Friday December 13 @7pm to entertain us again. Invite your friends and family! There will be a sign up sheet in the narthex for snacks after the concert!

LADIES AID CHRISTMAS BAKE SALE Sunday, December 8th, after Service

In the hallway by the office.

Any baked goods would be welcome, bring to the hallway by the office before Church Service. Please package and price your goods.

After Service stop by and buy some wonderful baked goods.

Thank you in advance to everyone who contributes baked goods.

The Secret Prayer Sister reveal was a great time of fellowship and fun. Especially, getting to know some of our new sisters in Christ who have joined us for the 2024-25 year. We welcomed 19 ladies with many new faces. Much fun and many laughs were had by all! Thank you to Linley, Ava and Liana for your help in serving and passing out gifts. If you have any questions, please either text or call me at 989-388-2069. . Diane Thurston

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. -- I Thessalonians 5:16-17

Missing are Sarah Sills, Kaitlyn Longoria and Doreen Lewis



CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS & NEWS

Memorials

In memory of Rob Lyon to St Peter Lutheran Church , \$470.00



Prayer Chain

If you have a prayer request, please call the church office (989) 224-3178 during office hours. If in the evening or weekend, please call Pam Mohr (989) 292-1686.

The Church will only send out emails if we have permission from the person or family of whom the email is concerning to respect peoples privacy.



Shut-In Visit List

Monthly Visits

Ellie Camburn
Linda Chant
Linda Davis
Rhonda Dedyne
Ilene Gibson
Mary Ann Grennell
Jan Maynard
Jeanette Mehney
Charlie Silm
Bernita Sillman
Albert Smith



Please review our list of Sick and Shut In and show them some love by calling and visiting. Continue to remember them in your daily prayers.

LCMS FOUNDATION

Repenting of “Yours” and “Mine”

Retailers have had their Christmas displays up since before Reformation Sunday. The kids have made their list and checked it twice, or three times or more. It won't be long before the tree will start shedding its needles, the stockings emptied, the gifts unwrapped, toys broken, and the too small or out of style clothes returned. Before we know it, the annual celebration of Christmas will be over.

But for the children of God, we know that the gift of Christmas doesn't ever end. Week in and week out, the Lord continues to shower His gifts on us. Every time the Lord gathers us to His house, and we are led to kneel at His table, the gift of forgiveness is repeatedly granted to us. It is nothing we deserve. It comes to us freely!

The fourth stanza of the stewardship hymn, “Forgive Us Lord for Shallow Thankfulness” (LSB 788) highlights both this gift and our response.

Teach us, O Lord, true thankfulness divine,

that gives as Christ gave, never counting cost

To learn thankfulness is necessary. The parents of young children are well-versed in the fact that they must teach their children thankfulness. It does not come naturally. The spiritual genetics inherited from our parents allow us to think that the world revolves around us. When we receive something, there is an inward desire to think that we in some way deserve it.

But there is no way that we deserve anything we get from our Lord. We need that ongoing lesson from God Himself. Thankfulness toward God is worked in us by the Holy Spirit. God's Word works this thanksgiving in us. We need this weekly reminder that Jesus didn't consider “equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself” for us, to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:6). He didn't bat an eye. He paid the price! Our life of stewardship is one of daily and weekly thanksgiving inspired by the Lord Himself.

That knows no barrier of “yours” and “mine,”

assured that only what's withheld is lost.

Because Jesus gave us everything and more, there can be no ownership. The child at Christmas is quick to claim that the newly gifted toy is “mine!” But as Psalm 24:1 asserts, “The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.” There isn't anything in creation that is ours. When we cling to and claim ownership of anything in creation, we are losing out on the continual gifts with which the Lord desires to shower upon us. Closed hands cannot receive anything new. We cling to the old and dead and miss the new thing that the Lord desires to do in and for us.

We are led to repent of the “yours” and “mine” and remove the lie that we have any ownership. In this we have the promise that God will continue to give to us. Not just at Christmas, but every Sunday at the altar in the Lord's house.

LCMS INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARIES

About the Erbers

Pastor David and Joyce Erber serve as missionaries with LCMS International Mission. We live in Ghana West Africa. David teaches at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Accra, Ghana and coordinates the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Online Master of Arts in Theology degree for pastors in Africa. Joyce is the Regional Business Manager for Africa and is responsible for accounting and financial dynamics for LCMS missionaries and projects across Africa.

How To Connect with David and Joyce

David.Erber@LCMS.org Joyce.Erber@LCMS.org or via: 3809 Westchester, Jackson, MI 49203

How To Send Financial Support For Our Mission Work In Africa:

1. Write check to: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
 2. On Memo Line, write: "Support for Erbers - Ghana"
 3. Send to: LCMS, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861
- Or go to: www.lcms.org/givenow/erber Or go to: Mission Central

If you would prefer not to receive these letters, please send us a note.

Please note: These letters are not intended to serve as solicitations for donations. Some recipients uphold us in prayer. Some recipients send a donation once a month, once a year or once every couple of years. Some recipients simply like to hear about what is going on with us from time to time. These letters are intended to be a word of thanks for prayers and support as well as an attempt to stay in touch.

If you have a moment, we would love to hear from you! *David and Joyce*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

St. Peter School...

Christmas Children's Program is Thursday, December 12th, at 11a.m. and 6p.m.

There is also, a Music Program on Thursday, December 19th, from 2-3p.m.

Accelerated Reader Prizes

We are starting a school-wide accelerated reader store this year. Kindergarten through 8th-grade students can take tests on the books they read in order to earn points through the AR program. They can then use those points once a month to purchase items from the AR store. We need your help accumulating prizes for the store. There is a box on the counter in the office where prizes can be dropped off.

Examples of items that could be purchased:

Stickers, fun school supplies, small toys, new books, craft/art projects and supplies, gift cards to local businesses (\$5-\$10). Some larger prizes are needed, check with a teacher first to help with these.

Update on Wittenberg Academy

As their first trimester draws to a close, our five high school students have written out reflections on their education and experiences thus far.

"Having a co-op to do Wittenberg Academy is better than schooling at home because when somebody needs help, most times, somebody else knows how to help them. It is also fun to have people to talk to and joke around with. Most of us come in four or five days a week and it is nice to have a community." -Annabelle Longoria

"I went to public high school last year, so the Saint Peter co-op has been a great transition into Wittenberg. It's more like what I am used to, a classroom with other kids to play and study with, but I get a quality Lutheran education, too. It helps that my siblings go to school at St. Peter, so I can keep track of them, and my parents can drop us off and pick us up all together."

-Lydia Klamer

"Logic is the best class. The teacher, Pastor Braaten, does a great job of explaining the difficult concepts of logic. The live chats over zoom are great because Pastor Braaten makes the class seem like a walk in the park. Even though it is school, I love this class and it is a lot of fun." -Nick Sikora

"One of our responsibilities this year has been to clean the church once a week. Some of the things we do are vacuum and mop, dust, and clean windows. We laugh a lot while cleaning, and it feels good to contribute to the life of the church." -Ava Savage

"Latin is my favorite subject at Wittenberg Academy. Pastor Curtis is a great teacher; he is very qualified to teach the class in that he can always point out my errors. I am so glad that we get to learn Latin. It is fun to translate sentences and learning Latin has helped my English. It is also a great start for learning other languages." -Andrew Bayer

We parents are incredibly proud of our students. They have adapted well to online teachers and homework submissions. The students have also exceeded our expectations, demonstrating stellar behavior and earning solid grades at Wittenberg Academy. We are grateful that St. Peter has offered up the space for our students to meet together, and we are thankful to the school staff and church groups for their willingness to share the building each day. Thank you!

-Kristin Bayer